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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

WEDNESDAY, September 15, 1937.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "NUT NEWS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Listeners, if the squirrels of this country haven't begun to celebrate yet this fall, they just haven't heard the news--the news of the nut crop this year. It's going to be big, the forecasters say. They predict a bumper crop of walnuts. And the largest almond crop since '26. And a pecan crop above average.

The predictions are, too, that the price of nuts on the market will be low. So if you have no nut trees of your own, you can buy nuts this year at lower prices than usual.

Squirrel housewives no doubt decided long ago that the easiest way to serve nuts to their families was just as they come from the shell. But human housewives, who like variety in the menu, are usually interested in different ways to use nuts. And the young lady who can give at least a hundred good answers to that question happens to be in Washington, D. C. at the Bureau of Home Economics. She is Mrs. Elizabeth Whiteman and you can see her almost any day at her desk or in the foods laboratories, measuring, testing, trying, and reporting on different foods. Because of the big nut crop this fall, I'm sure you'll be interested in some of the things she found out when she made her study of ways to use nuts.

According to Mrs. Whiteman, the oil in nuts gives them their flavor, though, of course, each different kind of nut has its own special flavoring substance beside. The oil in nuts, or their "fat-content", as the nutritionists say, affects both the flavor and the food value of nuts -- has much to do with how you use nuts in cooking, and where they stand in the diet.

Mrs. Whiteman says that a good many people who have the habit of nibbling nuts between meals or eating them as extras after a meal don't realize what very hearty food they are -- how very rich in oil. For example, pecans are over 70 percent fat! (At the University of Georgia recently they extracted pure pecan oil and found it excellent for salad and for cooking) Then, English walnuts, hickories, filberts, butter-nuts and Brazil-nuts are over 60 percent fat. And almonds, beechnuts, black walnuts, and pistachios are over half fat. You see why nuts stand along with foods like butter, cream, bacon, and chocolate in a diet list.

The oil in nuts decides whether they have a fresh or stale taste. When the oil becomes rancid, the nuts taste stale. And Mrs. Whiteman reports that the best way to keep nut-meats fresh is to keep them in an airtight container in a cool dry place away from light. They'll keep fresh much longer in the refrigerator than standing out on the warm kitchen shelf. Sometimes you can "freshen" rancid kernels by heating them in water that contains baking soda.

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For each cup of nut-meats, add 1 cup of water containing 2 tablespoons of baking soda. Bring to a boil, then rinse the nuts thoroughly, drain, and dry. That's a partial remedy for stale nuts, but here as with everything else, prevention is better than cure.

To bring out or intensify the fine flavor of nuts, Mrs. Whiteman suggests either roasting or frying. Her simple method of roasting nuts is to spread them on a baking pan with a small amount of fat, and heat them in a slow oven, stirring occasionally until they are light brown. Nuts roasted--or fried and salted, are especially good in nut-bread, cake and cookies--or chopped up in ice cream or candy. Almonds and Brazil nuts look better roasted if the dark skin over the kernel has been removed first. A few minutes' soak in hot water loosens the skin so you can slip it off. You'll see this process of removing the skin called "blanching" in the cookbooks.

One very convenient way to put nuts to use is to make them into nut butter or paste -- an excellent spread for sandwiches, crackers and even cake, or useful for flavoring many dishes. Mrs. Whiteman found that almonds, peanuts and cashew nuts all make delicious homemade nut-butter. All you need by way of equipment is a food chopper with a fine grinding-plate. To make a half pound of nut butter, use 2 cups of blanched and roasted nuts. Run the nuts through the chopper two, three--or as many times as necessary to get a smooth paste. Use the finest plate of the chopper and screw it on so tightly that the chopper turns hard. When the butter comes out fine and smooth, add a tablespoon of oil and a half teaspoon of salt and mix well. Pack the butter in a tight container and keep it in a cold place.

By the way, a little jar of homemade nut-butter is an idea for an unusual Christmas greeting.

Mrs. Whiteman found that chopped nuts can be added to almost any recipe for bread, muffins, and cakes. But she also found that nuts in a baked mixture have a tendency to absorb moisture and make the finished product dry, so she suggests placing the nuts in boiling water and then draining them before adding them to the cake or bread mixture in the usual way. She reports that black walnuts make spice cake especially good and that pecans are delicious in yeast rolls and pie or pastry. By the way, did you ever try adding some finely ground pecan meats to your pie-crust mixture? Substitute pecan meats for half the fat the recipe calls for. Pecan crust is excellent with cream filling.

That's only a start on all the different nut-dishes that Mrs. Whiteman could tell you about. Later in the fall, I'll bring you some further news of good ways to use the 1937 nut crop.

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